

The first records of *Gonocerus acuteangulatus* (Goeze) (Het.: Coreidae) in Buckinghamshire and another Hampshire record

Gonocerus acuteangulatus is an attractive and distinctive bug. It has the English name of Box Bug, and for many years was known in Britain only from the Box Hill area of Surrey, where its foodplant was Box *Buxus sempervirens*. The story of its spread to other foodplants and counties from 1990 onwards is told in R. Hawkins, 2003, *Shieldbugs of Surrey* (Surrey Wildlife Trust). Hawkins gives a range of foodplants including Hawthorn, wild and cultivated roses, Buckthorn and Yew. (A web search reveals that *G. acuteangulatus* is considered a pest of hazelnuts by commercial growers in Italy and Turkey.)

I first became acquainted with it in Hampshire (VC 11) in 2004, when my two-year-old son Dominic and I beat some conifers on New Years Day, at Chappetts Copse Wildlife Trust reserve (O. S. grid reference SU 653234). By that time the Box Bug was apparently widespread in Hampshire and Berkshire as well as Surrey and beyond (Jonty Denton, pers. comm.).

On 21 September 2005, I found what appears to be the first Buckinghamshire specimen, on a mixed hedge at Little Kimble railway station (SP 823066). The hedge contains a large specimen Leyland Cypress *Cupressocyparis x leylandii*. The following month *Gonocerus* was recorded again in Buckinghamshire, by Tony Marshall, who describes the record in the Buckinghamshire Invertebrate Group newsletter: "Found 15th October 2005 in Prestwood parish churchyard [SP 873996], sunning itself on a cherry-laurel hedge, not far from several yew-trees." This is some 8 kilometres south-east of my records.

Some winter beating produced three more Buckinghamshire specimens, close to the location of the first specimen. Two individuals were from Juniper *Juniperus communis* at Grangelands reserve (SP 827047), on 25 January 2006 and one from Leyland Cypress in my garden at Great Kimble (SP 820062) on 27 January 2006. Roger Hawkins' Surrey atlas points out that there is a related bug feeding on the Juniper, *Gonocerus juniperi*, not yet recorded in Britain, but my specimens from Juniper were not this latter species.

All these Buckinghamshire records are close to the Chequers Estate, which contains good stands of native Box, so it is just possible that *G. acuteangulatus* has maintained a population here as it had done at Box Hill. However, it was not recorded by G.E. Woodroffe who worked the Chilterns for bugs in the 1950s-1970s (Bernard Nau, pers. comm.). Given the lack of any previous records for VC 24 (Buckinghamshire), and its apparent capacity for rapid spread in recent years, it seems likely that it is a recent arrival in the county. If it continues to make use of Leyland Cypress the Box Bug looks set to become a familiar garden insect in future.

Thanks to Roy Maycock (Buckinghamshire plant recorder) for confirming the identity of the Lawson's Cypress, to Tony Marshall for allowing me to include his record, and to Bernard Nau for commenting on a draft of this note. — MARTIN C. HARVEY, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre. (E-mail: martin@kitenet.freeserve.co.uk).